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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7835
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1310
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 4846
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 8398
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 5960
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 3853
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1801
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000513

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP AND IO; PACOM FOR FPA

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: BURMA: ARRESTS, NEGLECT, AND A SNUB

REF: RANGOON 154

Classified By: Pol Officer Sean O'Neill for Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

SUMMARY

11. (C) Summary. Detained activist Min Ko Naing's health has deteriorated in prison, according to his family. While authorities have allowed a doctor to see him regularly, his family noted he was not receiving the level of care needed. Over a dozen Burmese journalists, some working for international media, were barred from attending an ASEAN press conference on June 24, although the Singaporean Ambassador and acting UN Country representative held a separate briefing for them. Police in Rangoon arrested a solo protestor on June 25. The protestor was calling for the release of political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi, before authorities detained her. A journalist who had introduced cyclone victims to ICRC and UNDP officials was charged with sedition and other crimes. End Summary.

MIN KO NAING

12. (C) Min Ko Naing's sister told us the detained activist was suffering from high blood pressure and spondylosis, a degenerative spinal disease. He also complained of numbness in one of his arms, which he feared may be a sign of a minor stroke, although that has not been evaluated by a doctor. His eye condition was also deteriorating, according to his sister. While prison officials have allowed Min Ko Naing's family to send him medicine and permitted a prison doctor to visit him daily to monitor his blood pressure, his sister complained that he is not receiving adequate treatment. In particular, she noted that the prison doctor is a general practitioner and complained that officials have not allowed her brother to see any specialists since he was taken to an eye specialist. A member of Min Ko Naing's family visits him every week and will continue to monitor his condition and press authorities to improve his access to proper health care.

13. (C) Min Ko Naing was arrested in August 2007 and has been held in Insein prison ever since. Authorities have charged Min Ko Naing with failing to register printed pro-democracy papers and for interfering with the regime's "roadmap to

democracy." If convicted, he could face as much as twenty years in prison (reftel).

ASEAN PRESS CONFERENCE

14. (C) Local AP correspondent Aye Aye Win confirmed that Burmese journalists, including those working for international media agencies, were denied entry to an ASEAN-sponsored press conference on June 24. Aye Aye Win said that an ASEAN official told the waiting reporters that the briefing was only meant for members of the media who accompanied ASEAN Secretary General Surin Pitsuwan. She pointed out, however, that prior to the press conference, at least three ASEAN press officials told members of the Burmese media they could attend, and noted the Burmese journalists were very upset as a result of the snub.

15. (C) Because the Burmese media was not allowed to attend the official press conference, Singaporean Ambassador Robert Chua and acting UN Country Representative Dan Baker held a separate briefing for them, in which they discussed the roundtable meeting held earlier in the day and took questions. Aye Aye Win believed that Chua was attempting to soothe the Burmese media's resentment over what they perceived as discrimination. She noted that an ASEAN official had confided that in May, the regime instructed ASEAN to exclude Burmese press from similar briefings and speculated ASEAN may have been under pressure to do so again.

MORE ARRESTS

RANGOON 00000513 002 OF 002

16. (SBU) We have confirmed that on June 25, police arrested a solo protestor in front of city hall in downtown Rangoon. According to the press, the unidentified woman shouted slogans calling for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and other political prisoners for ten minutes before police took her away. So far, authorities have not acknowledged her arrest or released her identity. The public square in front of city hall and adjacent to Sule Pagoda was the site of some of the largest demonstrations in September 2007. However, there have been no large-scale protests in the area since then.

17. (C) Authorities charged a detained journalist with sedition, "committing crimes against tranquility" and "inciting hatred against the government." A media contact confirmed that Ma Eint Khaing Oo, a reporter for Rangoon-based Ecovision journal, was formally charged on June 26 at Tamwe township court in Rangoon. She was arrested on June 10 and had been held at a local police station without charge since then. Our contact believed authorities arrested Ma Eint Khaing Oo because she helped several cyclone victims travel to ICRC and UNDP offices to explain the desperate situation in the delta.

COMMENT

18. (C) The Than Shwe regime continues to demonstrate its disregard for human rights, democracy, free speech, and protocol. Their efforts to control the message that gets out of Burma extend to their clumsy attempts to exclude the UN, INGOs, and foreign media from reporting on conditions in the country post-cyclone. Anyone who tries to speak freely risks extended arrest and neglect in prison. But many of those willing to take the risk and speak out refuse to give up, and the truth still finds a way to get out.

VILLAROSA